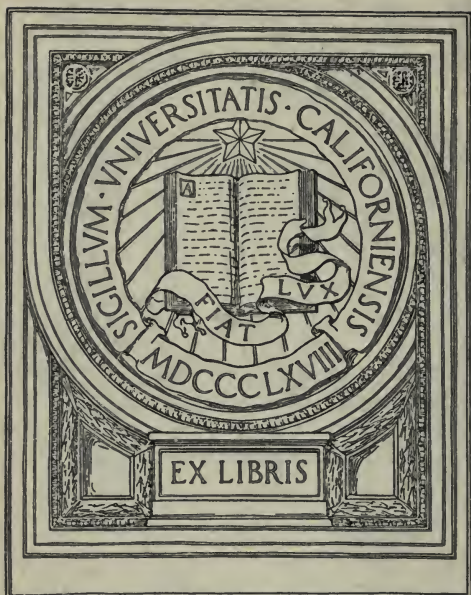










Pamphlets on finance.

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*of Hansard's Debates*  
*with extracts from*  
DEBATE ON SUGAR DUTIES.  
*Joseph Hume*

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S P E E C H

OF

JOSEPH HUME, Esq., M.P.,

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*On the 13th May, 1841,*

ON THE MOTION OF LORD JOHN RUSSELL.



WAYS AND MEANS,  
CORN LAWS, SUGAR DUTIES, &c.

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EXTRACTED FROM  
HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

1841.

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Extracted from

HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

11540



## SPEECH, &c.



### MR. HUME

Said, he was anxious to state the opinion he entertained upon the subject now before the House. It was a subject to which he had given a great deal of attention, and he had endeavoured to make himself fully acquainted with it. He assured the House, that no man had ever entered upon any enquiry with a greater desire to ascertain the truth than he had in reference to this question, the duties on Customs' Imports. Ever since he had had the honour of holding a seat in that House (a period of more than thirty years) he never had given a vote the tendency of which was not, in his view, to free the commerce of the country from its shackles and restrictions; and, thereby, to give the enterprise and capital of England their full scope and operation in Free-trade. It was on the same principle, he would also say, that, as a Reformer, he had never given a vote which did not go equally towards the extension of popular rights, and to shake off the shackles and oppression of the aristocracy. Four nights of the debate had now passed, and he was pleased to think, that the information which had been elicited, would be of great advantage to many hon. Members who had not sufficiently considered the subject before; but, above all, it would afford highly important information to the country;—it would shew what were the real sentiments of the majority of that House; and if they had some further discussion and explanation, he thought, that, notwithstanding the attempt of the hon. Gentlemen opposite to mystify the question, the country would be made aware of the real merits, as well as demerits, of the plan submitted to the House by the Government. Two nights had passed without its being ascertained what the intentions of hon. Members opposite were, or what object they had in view in refusing to go into a Committee to consider the existing laws on the importation of sugar. It was now evident that they refused to go into a Committee, because they refused to afford any relief to the people by the reduction of

taxation ; and simply desired to turn out the present Ministry. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock, indeed, had wittily and frankly said, that the result of the discussion was of little importance except in as far as it tended to secure this end. No doubt that was the desire of hon. Gentlemen opposite. Of course, they, as patriots and friends of humanity, had also the strongest desire to see able and talented men in the Government in lieu of those who now so inefficiently occupied these Benches. The speeches of the right hon. Member for the University of Cambridge (Mr. Goulburn) on the third night, and the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) the Member for North Lancashire, on the fourth night, of the debate, had drawn aside the veil which had before hung over the proceedings of the Tory party ; and had shown that their sole object was, to obtain place, and to do nothing for the relief of the country ; and, as regarded the duty on sugar they intended "to let things alone."

An attempt had been made, by Gentlemen opposite, to limit the discussion on the question to that of sugar only : but the measures proposed by the Ministers were of the highest importance to the country ; even more important, he would add, to the industrious classes than any question which had been brought forward during the time he had sat in Parliament, and he (Mr. Hume) was not disposed to confine himself to the discussion of so narrow a question as that of sugar. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) the Secretary for the Colonies, had been accused of bringing forward the question without any necessity ; and, at a time, very ill chosen. There was a deficiency of money to pay the establishments of the country ; and the Ministers proposed to raise that money by a decrease of taxation. If there was one question of more importance than another in their view, and certain of having their support, he expected, from hon. Gentlemen who brought forward these charges, that it would have been to provide means to maintain faith with the public creditors of this country ; and enable us to pay all just demands. He would not enter, at present, into how, or wherefore, the great increased expense had been incurred : but, as the policy of the Government and of this House, by their lavish expenditure, and increase of the naval and military establishments, had in this year left the country two millions and a half in debt, it was incumbent on this House to provide for the same. He would say, once for all, that no hon. Member disapproved more of the war policy of the Government, and of the course which had been taken by them, which had in five years time changed a surplus revenue of one million and a-half sterling to an excess of expenditure of two millions and a-half sterling, than he did. He, in every one of those years, had

done all that he could when the estimates were before the House, to check the increased expenditure; but both sides had urged on an unnecessary and lavish expenditure by an increase of our naval and military establishments which had brought on the present state of things.

He would here take the opportunity of noticing the blame which had been cast by Gentlemen on the opposite Benches upon the Government for having established the Penny Postage, and thereby diminished the revenue of the country. That charge of blame in respect to the revenue, afforded to his (Mr. Hume's) mind clear evidence of the ignorance of hon. Members on the result of that reduction in the postage charges. It was satisfactory to know, that the adoption of the Penny Post had not diminished our general revenue. The aggregate revenue of the United Kingdom had been higher, notwithstanding a reduction of one million sterling on letters, during the last three years, than in the three years preceding. In order to remove the unfair statements which had been put forth from time to time as to the state of the revenue by the alteration in the postage, he would refer to a Parliamentary paper, 268 of 1841, on the Table of the House, which ought to be better known to hon. Members than it was. From that return it appeared, that the net income from the ordinary revenues was—

| In the year ending 5th |      | £          | Yearly Average. |
|------------------------|------|------------|-----------------|
| January . . . . .      | 1836 | 46,270,828 | £<br>46,828,432 |
| ” ” . . . . .          | 1837 | 48,340,955 |                 |
| ” ” . . . . .          | 1838 | 45,873,505 |                 |
| ” ” . . . . .          | 1839 | 47,607,209 | 47,503,533      |
| ” ” . . . . .          | 1840 | 47,685,223 |                 |
| ” ” . . . . .          | 1841 | 47,218,178 |                 |

Shewing an average annual increase of revenue of 675,101*l.* in the three last more than in the three first years. A proof that the amount of the aggregate revenue had not diminished, although the revenue from the Post-office had been decreased. Hon. Gentlemen who spoke of deficient revenue in the past year, did not appear to know what the aggregate amount of the revenue really was. They seemed to think, that because there was a reduction in the revenue in one article, it could not be made up by increase from other articles. Besides the decrease of revenue from the Post-office, there had been a deficiency also in the revenue from sugar last year, amounting to upwards of 1,000,000*l.*, which had affected the aggregate of the revenue as much as the Post-office. In the year ending 5th April 1839, the *duty* on sugar was 4,813,671*l.*, but owing to the decreased importation of 41,569 tons, the duty on sugar

in the year ending 5th April, 1841, was only 3,980,062*l.*, showing (with the 5 per cent. added last year) a deficiency of 1,023,669*l.* sterling, on the duty. He thought there had been no remission of taxes which was more likely to benefit the country, looking at it as promoting commerce, encouraging science and improving morals; than the reduction of the postage. It appeared that, by the reduction of the rates of postage, 100 millions of letters had been written, and had passed to different parts of the country, more in the last than in any previous year; and he would ask, whether such an increase in the correspondence of the country could take place without producing great advantages in every way?

The aggregate increase of the revenue for the last three years over the three preceding years, having been annually 675,100*l.* notwithstanding the reduction of taxation from postage and sugar, shewed the tendency of the revenue to increase in other branches on reduction of taxation in branches of general use. It reflected discredit on that House, as keepers of the public purse, to have allowed that increased revenue to be exceeded by the increased expenditure for military and naval establishments. But those large establishments had been sanctioned by the House; the House had approved of those high estimates for the current year; they had been voted by large majorities, and must now be provided for. In the last four years we had incurred a debt for increased establishments of from five to six millions sterling; and, in the present year, we had still further increased them by one million and a half. He, therefore, had not expected that the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), or the noble Lord (Lord Sandon) would have alleged, that this was an improper time, whoever might be Minister, to consider how this deficiency was to be made up. The necessity of providing to pay these establishments had arrived!!

A taunt had been thrown out against Ministers, that this measure was brought forward without due consideration, and only as a matter of political expediency for the moment; and what was the proof? It was said, that last year a motion was made by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Ewart), to reduce the duty on foreign sugar to 36*s.*, which the Government had resisted; he (Mr. Hume) had had the pleasure of supporting that motion, and regretted the opposition then given to it; but it was now held, that, as the Government had voted against that measure last Session, they were prevented from bringing forward the same measure in this. He looked only to the value of the proposed measure, and considered that objection inadmissible. He cared not whether it was the result of the deliberation of a day, a week, or a year; he considered it an excellent measure that

was called for in justice to the people, and he should, therefore, give it his zealous support. When her Majesty's Ministers were thus taunted with a change of opinion on the subject, he could look back to many changes in the opinions of hon. Members opposite, that had been much greater, and in as short periods. But he never would taunt hon. Members with a change in their opinions and measures when they were likely to do good. When the right hon. Baronet, the Member for Tamworth, in 1829 seconded the efforts of the Duke of Wellington to effect Catholic emancipation, which the right hon. Baronet had always strenuously opposed, did he blame the right hon. Baronet? Not at all; he (Mr. Hume) always gave him great credit for his conduct on that very important occasion. The right hon. Baronet had acted as he hoped he ever would act, under a conviction that the measure was for the public welfare; he had yielded to the exigencies of the time. Let hon. Members read the letter of the right hon. Baronet, of the 25th of August, 1829, to the Duke of Wellington, in which he stated the reasons for his conduct, and that he would rather have retired from Parliament, than have assisted in carrying the measure of emancipation, which he believed would be prejudicial to the country in its operation; but, in deference to the opinions of the noble Duke, who had declared, that, rather than have one day of civil war in Ireland, he would carry Catholic emancipation or any other measure which was calculated to secure the peace of the country. Might not the ministers have due credit for acting on the same plea of necessity? He could mention many other sudden changes of policy by former Ministers in that House, and he was surprised that the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) should make a charge of inconsistency of conduct against Ministers, for proposing this year the duty they had objected to in the last, when it was well known that the noble Lord had made more sudden changes, without assigning any sufficient reason, than any other member since he (Mr. Hume) had been in Parliament. He need only refer to one. When the noble Lord brought in the Irish Tithe Bill, in 1833, there was a clause (No. 147) for appropriating the surplus of Church property to public uses. His conduct on that occasion would ever be memorable in that House; on a division that clause was carried by a majority of upwards of 300: but in the course of forty-eight hours the noble Lord came down and asked the House to reject that very clause, without any explanation why, in the interval, he had changed his opinion. There were many other instances which he could state of the noble Lord's political inconsistency, and yet the noble Lord, forgetting what he had done himself, charged that (the Ministerial) side of the House

with tergiversation and vacillating conduct. The noble Lord seldom spoke without due deliberation and preparation; and when he charged his late Friends with tergiversation, he (Mr. Hume) must say, that the noble Lord was the last man who ought to make such a charge. Did he (Mr. Hume) now blame him for these changes of opinion, if he had sufficient grounds for these changes? No—but he did blame him for challenging and accusing others for doing that which he had himself so often done.

Her Majesty's Ministers had been also charged with having brought forward the reduction of duty on foreign sugar at an inopportune time. It was clear, that some measure must be adopted for raising revenue to pay the excess of expenditure, unless he (Mr. Hume) could induce hon. Members to act with him, to cut down the expenditure, by reducing the large and unnecessary military and naval establishments; but the House had determined that the estimates were necessary and proper, and it, therefore, ought to provide the means of paying for them. There never had been a period, during the long time that he had been a public man, in which there was a greater degree of distress among the working classes than at the present moment, when our manufacturers were more pressed to keep their works going; when trade was more paralyzed, or when there was more difficulty of carrying on business without loss. He had seen letters from different parts of the country, stating the stoppage of mills, to four days work a-week, in many places; and in some places they had been shut up altogether. He had supported the Poor-law Bill, by which the working classes were thrown upon their resources, to provide for themselves by their own industry; and yet Acts of Parliament prevented their obtaining employment. Parliament, by law, had prohibited the import of food, except at exorbitant prices, which restricted the foreign trade of the country and deprived the people of employment, and the wages by which they could obtain food and cloathing; and they were left to the workhouse for their only resource. There were no signs of the times, that ought to be more carefully and more quickly attended to than these of a starving discontented population! Was there nothing in the state of the trade of London, that ought to attract attention? The late Governor of the Bank (Sir John Reid), had been very facetious last night, and had told them that there was no despondency in the city, yet, in the same breath, he said, that there was no buying and selling, that there was a stagnation of business, and that no one knew where he could make a shilling. Was that an usual occurrence, and was it the way in which the commerce and industry of this country could be maintained? The distress

had not yet reached the landed interest, because the landlords were fattening upon the other classes, and the protective and prohibitive laws were upheld to maintain their high rents and increase the means of luxury. He maintained, then, that the time was come when the House ought to apply a remedy; and he was only sorry that it had been delayed so long. He was confident, that if her Majesty's Government at the commencement of the present Session had been acquainted with the great and increasing distress that existed, and with the real state of the commerce of the country, they would sooner have brought forward these remedial measures. He would not, however, cast reflections on that account against Ministers, but would express his great satisfaction, that they had now proposed these excellent measures intended and calculated to improve the finances as speedily as possible, and, at the same time, to remove the distress of the country. The noble Lord, the Member for North Lancashire, admitted, that the deficiency ought to be made up, but neither he nor any one on the opposite side had informed the House by what method they proposed that that deficiency was to be made up. Perhaps to remain silent on that point might be the Parliamentary course; but he thought that, in the circumstances in which the country was now placed, and when the proposal of the Ministers was to be rejected, by some proposal for relieving the distress and for supplying the money wanted, ought to be made by those who rejected it.

The hon. Member for Whitby (Mr. Chapman) had said, that he (Mr. Hume) was a free trader, and was always for buying in the cheapest, and selling in the dearest market. That was certainly his (Mr. Hume's) creed, and he entirely agreed in the definition of 'Free trade' given by the noble Lord, the Member for North Lancashire; but unfortunately for the country, prohibitions and restrictions existed which limited the manufactures and trade of the country to a great extent; and the present measure of her Majesty's Ministers was only an approximation to Free trade. He moreover hoped, that ere long it would be the law of Parliament, that there should be no taxation of the people except for the purposes of the revenue of the country. Every amount raised by protection was a tax levied on the consumer, and he held, that no money ought, by what is called protective duties of import, to be taken out of the pockets of one individual to go into the pockets of any other individual, as that was both impolitic and unjust; and he further held it to be a wise and politic principle, that the Government ought, for the purposes of revenue, to place the smallest possible amount of duty upon those articles of food which were for the consumption of the mass of the people.

Let him ask, however, whether such was the case at the present moment, and whether there were not protective duties generally upon every kind of food. The noble Lord the Member for North Lancashire had taunted her Majesty's Government for claiming the merit of proposing Free trade, whilst they continued to levy a greater rate of duty upon the same kind of goods coming from one port, than from another, which he would frankly say, was any thing but Free trade? The plan was not Free trade—it was only an approximation to Free trade. The proposal of the noble Lord (Lord John Russell) still maintained considerable protection; the plan, therefore, was only a reduction of the present high duties to a smaller amount; and, if the noble Lord near him claimed for his measure the merit of Free trade, he agreed with the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) that he was not entitled to do so. But the noble Lord the Secretary for the Colonies, had claimed no such merit—he had been perfectly candid. He admitted that the principle he was advocating was not a new one; that it had been brought forward by Mr. Huskisson and acted upon by that gentleman with great benefit to the country. He did not claim the merit of introducing any new plan, but that, in proposing the present measure, he was contented to follow the good example of Mr. Huskisson, in taking away prohibition and substituting protection, leaving the question to be decided in the committee whether the protection proposed was too great or not; and the noble Lord further stated, that he would be content to give all the credit to Mr. Huskisson, and to his friends, if he were only allowed and assisted by them to carry out his present proposal. These were the principles propounded in the masterly speech of the noble Secretary for the Colonies, and he only regretted that the beneficial results anticipated would not be obtained so speedily as the state of the country required, and as the merits of that plan deserved. There was, he admitted, no claim to Free trade in that speech—only an approximation to it; why, then, should the noble Lord be taunted with bringing forward a proposal for Free-trade? He (Mr. Hume) wished that the proposal had been for the removal of all restrictions and protections; and he was satisfied, that ere long they must come to Free trade. The hon. Member for Antrim, and the noble Lord (Lord Sandon) desired to have a complete monopoly of sugar; and he would refer to the memorial of the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, presented to this House by the right hon. Member for Cambridge, in proof of what they required. They stated, that they “had heard, that the prohibitory duty on foreign sugar was to be withdrawn;” thus admitting that there was a prohibitory duty. The right hon. Member for Cambridge had beat about the

bush, and had hesitated to defend monopoly, but that Council distinctly demanded prohibition and nothing else; for they went on to state, "that the admission into the home market of sugar, not the produce of her Majesty's colonies would oblige those colonies to enter into competition with other colonies possessing advantages superior, and that such a competition would be fruitless." These were the statements of the friends of the hon. Member for Antrim, who had informed the House, that the colonies must have the market for British sugar, which their new ally, the right hon. and learned Member (Dr. Lushington) for the Tower Hamlets, had recommended last year. The conduct of that right hon. Member was the more extraordinary, as he had prepared resolutions in 1840, stating, that free labour was more profitable than slave-labour, and that the British colonies could produce cheaper sugar than the slave colonies. At a public meeting of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, in Exeter Hall, on the 18th of June, 1840, where he attended, these resolutions were agreed to:—

1. "That upon the evidence of facts to which the attention of this Convention has been directed, it is satisfactorily established, as a general axiom, that free labour is more profitable to the employer, and consequently cheaper than slave-labour."
2. "That of all kinds of slave-labour, that of imported slaves has been demonstrated to be most costly and least productive."

He was pleased to inform the House, that he (Mr. Hume) had that day received from five anti-slavery associations, in different parts of the kingdom, assurances, that the conduct of the right hon. and learned Member for the Tower Hamlets (Dr. Lushington) had given dissatisfaction, and that they considered he had acted rashly in joining the sugar planters in the anti-slavery cry; and especially in resisting the proposal of Ministers. The Ministers had come forward, not to make this a question of sugar, or timber, or corn, but, as he (Mr. Hume) believed, to revise the whole tariff; and, by a reduction of duties on these three principal articles of import alone the Chancellor of the Exchequer expected to make up the addition required to the revenue.

The President of the Board of Trade had not dealt fairly to the measure of the Government, in not explaining to the House what he meant to do on the whole subject—whether he meant to revise the entire tariff, as he (Mr. Hume) believed. At present, therefore, the House was left somewhat in the dark, by not having all the details of the ministerial plan before it; and that he considered to be a mistake of Ministers. He yet had hopes, that before this debate terminated, the right hon. Gentleman, (the President of the Board of Trade) would supply the defect, by ex-

plaining fully the intentions of Ministers with regard to all other articles now subject to high duties. They ought to carry out their principles as far as possible, and liberate trade from all protective duties, not required for revenue, and finish their work as well as they had begun it. He did not approve of the proposed rates of duty on sugar, being of opinion that they had not sufficiently lowered the duty on colonial sugar, which they ought to reduce to 18s. or 20s., the rate existing in 1801. The country should, however, understand, that the object of Ministers was to raise revenue for the public service without new taxation; and that the object of their opponents was, to continue protection, or in other words, to continue the tax on the consumers of sugar, and of corn, for the sake of the planter and owner of the soil. This protection tax was not applied to any national purpose, but solely to fill the pockets of planters and landlords, who were, thus, to be enriched at the expense of the rest of the community. He would prove, before he sat down, that the reduction of duty on sugar, proposed by Ministers, would not be the trifling centesimal part of a farthing, as some Members asserted on the opposite benches, but a substantial two or three pence in the pound weight, so that the benefit to the consumer, by the reduction proposed, would be important.

The hon. Member for Aylesbury (Captain Hamilton) had stated that cheap bread necessarily implied low wages; a common statement by Corn-law supporters; whilst he (Mr. Hume) asserted that all experience showed results directly the reverse, for whenever bread was cheap, trade was brisk, wages were high, and artizans had adequate food, lodging, and clothing. This held good in general in England, but the strongest proof was to be found in the United States of America, where food was generally cheap, and wages always high. At the time he spoke, by the *Gazette* price, a tax of not less than 23s. was required at the Custom-house on the importation of every quarter of wheat which raised the price to the consumers and added to the profit of the landlord upon every quarter of wheat grown in the country. Yet the landed aristocracy, pretending to be extraordinarily humane, cried out in high places, "God forbid that we should tax the bread of the people!" But such, in reality, was the fact. The truth must be told, and the cause of the evil was, that five millions of the industrious classes had no voice in the House of Commons, and hence the unequal and unjust manner in which the people were taxed by the landed aristocracy, whose influence ruled both Houses of Parliament. It was a question for the serious consideration of the country, that, whilst the whole revenue collected for the payment of the national debt, the civil

list, the army, navy, and public establishments, was fifty millions sterling, not less than fifty millions sterling more had been extorted from the people in the last year in the shape of bread-tax, by landlords. The amount of tax of fifty millions sterling was estimated by J. D. Hume in his evidence before the Import Duties Committee, on the calculation that the price of wheat was raised only 10s. per quarter by the monopoly; but if the increased price of 20s. per quarter was paid to the landlord (and he believed it had amounted to at least that sum), the bread-tax in the last year could not be less on the community than one hundred millions sterling. Other witnesses had given calculations on different principles; but all of them showed the amount of the tax on food to amount to that enormous sum.

The hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Gladstone) had talked very pathetically of grinding, by the cruelty attending the cultivation of sugar, the bones and sinews of the negroes in Cuba and the Brazils into gold; but had he no compassion for the labouring classes of this country, whose bones and sinews were ground into gold by the bread-tax, to add to the wealth of the landlords? [*“Hear!” and some confusion.*] He was sure, that those who made this disturbance were landlords; the authors of the evils to which he alluded, who did not like to be thus reminded of the effects of their monopoly of food, on the people. He asserted, that, but for the Corn and other prohibitive laws, the trade of the country would at this time have been most flourishing, and the people employed happy. The accursed Corn-laws interfered with the revenue of the country, and in every way with the comfort and happiness of the people—they prevented them from exchanging the produce of their labour for food—they prevented them from getting work and wages, and thereby, many were actually obliged to lie down and die, while the landlords stood by apparently indifferent to such scenes of misery. [*“Oh, oh!”*] This was not a matter to be treated with levity, it was highly unbecoming in any Member so to conduct himself, when the sufferings of his fellow-creatures were described; and, especially, if he, by bad laws, was a party to produce such sufferings. He repeated that he should like to see the hon. Member for Newark, and others, who had spoken so pathetically of the cruelty to the black labourers, extend a little of their sympathy towards the industrious and oppressed classes of their white labourers now starving in many parts of the country.

The next sufferers by the protective system, were the merchants and manufacturers; and the farmers were also beginning to open their eyes, and to be aware of the delusion practised upon them by the cry to support the Corn-laws. The Duke of Buckingham

had stated that the farmers were men without guile; he (Mr. Hume) wished he could say as much for the landlords; they had contrived to impose, for a long while, upon their tenants, by persuading them that the Corn-laws were for the benefit of the tenants and labourers alone; but those tenants were gradually becoming sensible of the manner in which they had been imposed upon, and that the Corn-laws put money into the pockets of the owners of the soil often, without benefitting the farmer; and attended with constant and great injury to the rest of the community. As he had already said, not less than fifty millions sterling on the estimate of 10s. of advanced price per quarter in wheat, were annually taken out of the pockets of the consumers to be put into the pockets of the rich. The consequence of this heavy landlord's tax was, a difficulty in collecting the taxes for the service of the State; and hence, in truth, the failure of the budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of last year. An attempt was made to increase the taxes on Customs and Excise by 5 per cent. and raise thereby two and a half millions of additional revenue; but the high tax on food prevented its success. He desired the House and the country to bear in mind, that, what was called protection of the landed interest was only another word for taxation to enrich the landlords; and he trusted that the people, and especially the farmers, would no longer be deceived by such words. What was the real object of the Ministerial measure? The object was to reduce the burdens of the people; whilst the Opposition were struggling to increase them—they desired to continue these taxes, not for the general purposes of the nation, but to enable planters and landlords to increase their incomes, and keep up their expensive establishments. He had made an accurate calculation of the amount of the tax which the people had paid to the planters in the increased prices of three articles, sugar, molasses, and coffee, consumed by them in the last year (1840) amounting to between five and six millions sterling, by what is called 'protection on British colonial sugar and coffee, which would shew the real pressure of that class-interest taxation.

The quantity of sugar consumed in that year was in cwts. 3,594,834\*, and the price in bond was on an average of the whole year 49s. 1d. per cwt.; whilst the price of foreign sugar in bond was 21s. 6d. per cwt., shewing the difference in price per cwt. of 27s. 7d., which amounted in the year to . . . . £ 4,957,875

The quantity of molasses consumed was 423,126 cwts.,† and the difference in bond between the price of foreign and of British molasses was 14s. per cwt., making an increase of price to the consumer in the year of . . . . £ 296,188

The quantity of coffee consumed in the year was 28,723,735 lbs.,‡

\* (P. P. 290 of 1841.)      † (P. P. 61 of 1841.)      ‡ (P. P. 61 of 1841.)

the protection duty of 3*d.* per lb. and 1*d.* expense of extra freight to the Cape of Good Hope, made an increase of price of 4*d.* per lb. being on the whole quantity . . . . . £ 478,728

Making, by protection alone, an additional tax on the consumer, for these three articles of . . . . . £ 5,732,791

besides, by the decreased consumption of sugar, a loss was suffered in the revenue of between three and 400,000*l.*, which the people must make up by other taxes. The effects of the monopoly of sugar were clearly proved by the statement he held in his hand of the increased consumption of tea and coffee in the twenty years past, and a decrease of sugar in the same period.

The consumption in the United Kingdom was —

|           | in 1821               |   | in 1840               |
|-----------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| of tea .  | 26,386,873lbs.        | . | and 32,262,905 lbs.   |
| of coffee | 7,593,000lbs.         | . | and 28,723,735        |
|           | <hr/> lbs. 33,979,873 |   | <hr/> lbs. 60,986,640 |

being an increase of consumption of 80 per cent., in the two articles taken together, notwithstanding the interruption of supply of tea from China with a consequent increase of price.

The consumption of sugar in 1821 was 3,056,882 cwts.; and if there had been an increase of 80 per cent., or 2,445,505 cwts., which was the rate of increase of tea and coffee, the quantity consumed would have been 5,502,387 cwts. instead of 3,594,834 cwts., which was the actual consumption, or only 15 per cent increase. If the increase had been at the same rate as coffee and tea, viz. 80 per cent., the increase of revenue to the Government would have been 2,394,000*l.* at 24*s.* duty; and one-half more, if foreign sugar at 36*s.* per cwt. had made up that increase.

It thus appeared, that tea and foreign coffee had been admitted, and there had been an increase in the consumption of 80 per cent. while on sugar, under the prohibitive duties, there had been an increase of only 15 per cent. Tea and coffee had been largely used without the proportion of sugar, to the great privation of the people. It was very important to know, that the consumption of sugar had decreased during the last forty years, as the duty had increased. In 1801, when the duty was 20*s.* per cwt., the consumption was 28½lbs. per head; in 1811, when the duty had been increased, the consumption, allowing for the increase of population in the interval, was only 22lbs. per head; in 1821, the consumption had decreased to 21lbs. per head; in 1831, when the price was low, (only 47*s.*) the consumption rose to 23lbs. per head; but in 1840, when the price was extravagantly high, the consumption decreased to 14½lbs. per head. Such had been the effect of the

prohibitive duties on the consumption of sugar. If foreign coffee had been prohibited the same results would have followed; but the consumption of coffee had increased in consequence of the admission of foreign-grown coffee into the home-market, though at an increase of duty of 50 per cent. He asserted, that if foreign-grown sugar had been admitted at a moderate duty the same result as took place in coffee would have followed, and the revenue would have been increased by that import. He held in his hand tables prepared to prove these assertions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed by his budget to raise 700,000*l.* by admitting foreign sugar at a duty of 36*s.* per cwt., or 12*s.* more than British colonial sugar; and he would demonstrate by what had actually taken place, in the consumption and amount of duty on coffee, that such expectation would have been realized. The duty of 1*s.* 3*d.* per pound on foreign coffee had been almost a prohibitive duty (as 63*s.* per cwt. had been on sugar) until, in 1838 it was discovered, that, by landing foreign coffee at the Cape of Good Hope, and obtaining a certificate of the same, it could be admitted to British consumption at a duty of 9*d.* per lb., or 50 per cent more than the duty on British colonial coffee; and although the circuitous voyage from Hayti or Brazil to the Cape, occasioned an increase of freight and charges of about 1*d.* per lb. yet the importation had been carried on to a large extent, with great benefit to the consumer, and increase to the public revenue, as appears by the following account:—

*The amount of gross revenue from coffee consumed in the United Kingdom, in each of the four years 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, was :—*

|                                                                                               | 1837.       | 1838.           | 1839.           | 1840.           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Of British growth at 6 <i>d.</i><br>per lb. . . . .                                           | 699,400     | 565,246         | 451,860         | 374,736         |
| Of Foreign growth viâ Cape<br>of Good Hope, 9 <i>d.</i> per<br>lb. and 1 <i>d.</i> charge . . | 230<br>(1.) | 121,073<br>(2.) | 327,993<br>(3.) | 548,126<br>(4.) |
| Making the yearly Revenue from Coffee . . .                                                   | £699,630    | £686,319        | £779,853        | £922,862        |

(1.) P. P. 38. 1839.

(2.) P. P. 80. 1840.

(3.) & (4.) P. P. 61. 1841.

By this statement it will be seen, that if no foreign coffee had been admitted, there would have been a loss of revenue on coffee of 324,664*l.* sterling in the year 1840 as compared with the year 1837 (which is exactly the decrease of the duty on British coffee in those three years). But, by the admission of foreign coffee at a protective duty of 3*d.* per lb. or 50 per cent. more than British Colonial, the aggregate revenue on coffee was thereby increased in these three years to 232*l.* Thus, by allowing foreign coffee to fill up the deficient supply of the British colonial coffee, the duty on foreign coffee increased 547,896*l.* sterling, whilst the duty on British coffee fell off 324,664*l.* sterling. He (Mr. Hume) asserted that the same result would have been produced by admitting foreign sugar at 36*s.* to fill up the deficiency of the British colonial sugar in the last three years. He had prepared a statement to show the quantity of British colonial sugar actually consumed (per P. P. 290, 1841) in the United Kingdom, and the deficiency in each of these years as follows :—

|                                                   | 1837.              | 1838.              | 1839.              | 1840.              |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Of British Colonial consumed . . . .              | Cwts.<br>3,954,810 | Cwts.<br>3,909,665 | Cwts.<br>3,825,599 | Cwts.<br>3,594,834 |
| And the deficiency of the supply in these years . | - - -              | 45,145             | 129,211            | 359,976            |
| Cwts. . . .                                       | 3,954,810          | 3,954,810          | 3,954,810          | 3,954,810          |

If this deficiency of supply of British colonial sugar in the year 1838, viz. 45,145 cwts., had been made up by the admission of foreign sugar at 36*s.* per cwt. in the same way as foreign coffee had been admitted, the revenue would have been viz :—

|                                                                                                                                                    |   |   |   |   |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| In the year 1838, the actual revenue from British sugar at 24 <i>s.</i> per cwt., was                                                              | - | - | - | - | £4,656,892 |
| And if the deficient supply of 45,145 cwts. had been made up by foreign sugar at 36 <i>s.</i> per cwt., there would have been added to the revenue | - | - | - | - | 81,261     |

And the revenue of the year would have been - - £4,738,153

|                                                                                                                                                  |   |   |   |   |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| In the year 1839, the actual revenue from sugar was                                                                                              | - | - | - | - | £4,586,936 |
| And if the deficiency of colonial sugar of 129,211 cwts. had been made up by foreign sugar at 36 <i>s.</i> per cwt., there would have been added | - | - | - | - | 232,579    |

|                                                         |   |   |   |   |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| And the revenue of the year would have been             | - | - | - | - | £4,819,515 |
| In the year 1840, the actual receipt for sugar duty was | - | - | - | - | £4,449,070 |

|                                                                                                                                       |   |   |   |   |                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| And if the deficiency of colonial sugar of that year of 359,976 cwt. had been made up by foreign at 36s., there would have been added | - | - | - | - | 647,956           |
| And the revenue of the year would have been                                                                                           | - | - | - | - | <u>£5,097,026</u> |

Thus supposing no increase in the consumption of sugar to have taken place in the years 1838, 1839, or 1840, but that it had remained stationary, the deficiency being supplied by foreign sugar at 36s. per cwt. the revenue would have been 5,097,026*l.* in 1840, instead of 4,449,070*l.* which was a clear proof that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would by that means have received in the last year 647,956*l.*, being nearly the additional sum he estimates to receive for the ensuing year. And if the consumption had increased in the degree that coffee and tea did, the revenue would have been much larger. Although by the last advices it appeared, almost to a certainty, that the crop of sugar in Demerara and the rest of the West-India Islands for the current year would be less than that of the last year. Yet he believed that the poverty of the working classes would prevent any increase of consumption: and he thought the Government was called upon to provide against the price of sugar becoming by a further decrease in quantity this year, as high as it was last year; and he considered that they were perfectly justified in resorting to the means which they now proposed for making up the amount of revenue estimated. He was willing to concede a fair protection to the West-India interest for some time longer, but he must state to the House that the proposed duty instead of being a protection of 50 per cent., was, in reality, a protection of 80 per cent. to the British planter. Taking the price of West-India sugar at 6*l.*s., as had been stated by the hon. Member for Antrim, there would have to be deducted from that amount, first 24*s.* and 5 per cent., or 25*s.* 2*d.* for the amount of Customs' duty paid, and a further sum of 7*s.* 10*d.* for insurance, freight, and other expenses, leaving a clear net price of 28*s.* per cwt., for which the grower of sugar in Jamaica could draw upon his agent in London. Then supposing foreign sugar to sell for the same price (6*l.*s.), there would have to be deducted from that amount, first, for duty, 36*s.* and 5 per cent., or 37*s.* 9*d.* and for freightage, insurance, and other expenses, 7*s.* 10*d.*, the same amount as had been deducted upon the West-India grower's returns, which would leave to the foreign grower only 15*s.* 5*d.* If the Jamaica grower received 28*s.* net returns, and the Cuba grower only 15*s.* 5*d.*, this difference of 12*s.* 7*d.* on 15*s.* 5*d.* amounted to a protection of 81 per cent., which he thought was

a very high protecting duty. For his part, he thought that this amount of protecting duty ought not to be permanent, but that it should be reduced by degrees.

He had another proof to offer of the effect of the prohibitory duties in raising the price to the consumer. A return on the Table of the House (No. 290 of 1841), showed what had been the difference of price between British and Brazil sugar in bond. It appeared, that from the year 1823 to 1835, the price of British colonial sugar was 30*s.* 3*d.*, and of Brazil 25*s.* 2*d.* per cwt.; making the difference between these sugars in bond, taking the annual average, 5*s.* 7*d.*; and if the bounty upon West-India sugar when refined and exported in these years were deducted, both colonial and foreign sugars would be found to have been at exactly the same price. During all this period no monopoly existed, as there was a surplus of West-India sugar beyond the consumption of England, part of which was exported. But, during the last five years, in which the supply of British colonial sugar was falling off, namely, from the years 1836 to 1840; the return showed, that in 1836, the difference in price was 12*s.* 1*d.*; in 1837, 13*s.* 4*d.*; in 1838, 12*s.* 5*d.*; in 1839, 17*s.* 1*d.*; and in 1840, the difference was 27*s.* 7*d.* In the last year, therefore, the people of this country paid 3*d.* per pound in the shape of a protective duty upon sugar; but, on the average of these five years, the price was 39*s.* 6*d.* for British colonial, and 22*s.* 9*d.* for Brazil, and the difference 16*s.* 9*d.* per cwt. for the whole period. He would ask, ought such a tax to be allowed to continue? The average increase of price by protection for these five years was 16*s.* 9*d.*, and the people of this country having during that period consumed 18,773,307 cwts.\* of sugar, had consequently paid the enormous sum of 15,236,000*l.* taxation in the shape of protection to the sugar monopolists, over and above what they would have paid for their sugar if no protective duty had existed. If this was not plunder of the people, by law, for the benefit of one class only, he should like to know what was plunder. He would say, put an end to protection, by degrees if they would, but do it, and get out of a bad system into a good

\* P. P. 290, of 1841.

| In the years    | Sugar consumed. |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1836 . . . . .  | 3,488,399 cwts. |
| 1837 . . . . .  | 3,954,810 "     |
| 1838 . . . . .  | 3,909,665 "     |
| 1839 . . . . .  | 3,825,599 "     |
| 18 40 . . . . . | 3,594,834 "     |
|                 | <hr/>           |
|                 | 18,773,307      |

one. Looking at all our experience in the reduction of duties from the year 1815 to the present time, he defied any person to find an instance in which relaxation of protection (*i. e.* reduction of import duties) did not extend the commerce, and promote the interests of the country as well as the comforts of the consumer.

The noble Lord, the Member for North Lancashire, had quoted a Liverpool price current in support of his assertion, that the plan of the Ministers could not be carried out. He (Mr. Hume) asserted, that that very price current answered the objections and arguments of the noble Lord. Why, he would ask, was it, that, in the price current referred to by the noble Lord, it was stated that the measures announced by the Government could not be carried out? Why? Not because the measures were improper, but because the whole landed interest was banded together, to support the monopoly. He (Mr. Hume) would also refer to a Liverpool price current of the 1st of May in the present year, in which was the following statement:—

“The able and enlightened views, however, of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as developed in the Budget of the 30th ult., give us every encouragement to anticipate the removal of those hindrances of wealth and prosperity, those checks to enterprise, those results of a cramped and ignorant policy—the heavy protective (alas! prohibitory) import duties. We may also hope for a moderate fixed, instead of a sliding scale of duty for wheat and flour, so as to admit a constant supply from the United States and the corn countries of Europe. A direct trade, which has been dormant for years, will also be opened with those states which formerly exported vast quantities of timber to this country, but now only know the country by name, or the trade from tradition.

Was this to be interpreted as disapproving of the measures of Government? Quite the contrary; and he was sure, that the price current of every merchant unconnected with the monopolists, would state the same thing. Now, with respect to the remarks of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock (Mr. Colquhoun) he must say, that they were very inconsistent; no Member indeed had been more inconsistent in his statements in this debate, with the exception of the hon. Member for Beverly (Mr. Hogg). Mr. Hogg an East-India planter, had strongly advocated the admission of East-India rum and sugar into this country, on the same duty as West-India, and he proposed a monopoly for both, against foreign sugar. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock pretended to be, a free trader, and said he was anxious to get rid of monopoly, but yet that hon. Member objected to the reduction of the duty on foreign sugar, and seemed to be delighted at the prospect of removing the present Government from the Treasury Benches—that desire had overcome the hon. Gentleman's love of Free trade [*“hear, hear”*]. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock asked where were to be found those per-

sons who called for an alteration of the Sugar-duties? Had the hon. Member read the petitions that were presented to that House? if not, he had; and he could tell the hon. Member that scarcely a petition, on the subject of the revision of the Tariff and measures proposed by Government, had been presented, that did not particularly mention the article of sugar. The hon. Gentleman also said, let the merchants and manufacturers who demand cheap sugar come forward, and say that they require no protection for their own trade. Why, they had done so publicly, again, and again. Deputations from many of the manufacturing towns had made that declaration in London. The town of Dundee had come to a resolution, which he held in his hand, that they were ready to give up all protection for the linen trade, their principal trade, and that they were ready to meet the whole world, if the Corn-laws were repealed. He was warranted in saying, that in the present distressed state of the country, with the almost unanimous wish of every merchant and manufacturer, upon the subject of free-trade; and looking at the deficiency of the revenue, the Government was not justified in attempting to increase the revenue by new taxes, but, by freeing trade from protective and prohibitive taxes, to place it on a more just and firm basis. The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) had made a statement last night, which it was to be hoped, would tell upon the country with as much effect as the famous declaration of the Duke of Wellington against Reform, in 1830. The noble Lord used these words,—

“He agreed that the seed which had now been sown would produce its fruit: but he feared that it would be the fruit of bitter animosity between the contending classes for many years; he feared that it would aggravate those jealousies and rivalries between the agricultural and manufacturing interests, which every former Government had sought rather to soothe and heal than to aggravate.”

He (Mr. Hume) agreed that the seed of Free-trade had been sown, but he differed from the noble Lord, and believed that many years would not elapse before Free-trade would triumph over monopoly. He would find to his cost, as the Duke of Wellington had done, that a famishing people were not easily restrained in their just demands for food. [“*Pooh, pooh.*”] They might say “pooh, pooh,” but it only proved that they had given little consideration to so serious a subject, and thought lightly of the millions of the most industrious persons in the country who were starving through class and selfish legislation.

He admitted, that the Government had begun late with their good measures, but it was never too late to do well. They had stated to the country generally what their plan was, in the words of the noble Lord (Lord John Russell), to diminish excessive pro-

tective duties, and enable the people to purchase the necessaries of life, and, at the same time, to obtain an increase of the revenue. That their measures would, when passed, lay a new foundation for the commercial prosperity and greatness of this country. It now only remained for the President of the Board of Trade to explain more fully what he meant to do in the revision of the tariff and in the reduction of the import duties. There were many other articles besides sugar, timber, and corn, which it was necessary to deal with; and he would tell the Government, that they must go through with the revision of all—there must be no compromise. The Tories might make a show of their great humanity, and talk of the thousands of slaves that were sacrificed in Cuba and Brazil to the Moloch of sugar; but let them look at the thousands of our own countrymen who were daily sacrificed to the Moloch of our Corn and prohibitive laws; and let the hon. Member for Newark look at the fact that the bones and sinews of the best portion of our people are ground down by unjust laws on one side, and by protective duties on the other which checked commerce, and raised the price of food, to aggrandize the rich landlords and planters. The Government had been taught by long experience, that they must not depend for support from the other side of the House—and it was clear, that the aristocracy were ready to expel them. Let them now, though at the eleventh hour, take the part of the people; let them legislate for the benefit of the nation at large, and not allow the selfish class-laws, which now filled the statute book, to favour the few. Let them inscribe on their banners, “down with all taxation for the protection of class interests—down with the Corn-laws—down with all monopolies,” let equal laws to the rich and to the poor be their motto; and the people would then cheerfully support them. Let the conduct of the Ministers be straightforward and honest; and then they had nothing to fear from Tory opposition or class-interests, however coalesced. He trusted, that although the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) might lose this vote, he would not be alarmed, but adhere to the views which he had so nobly expressed on introducing the motion. Let the noble Lord stand by his colours, and he had no doubt, that the people would support him and carry him triumphantly through, in spite of all Tory opposition.

THE END.

Extracted from

HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.











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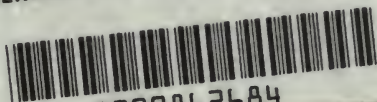
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